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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION IRAN US HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT US-
BOLIVIAN RELATIONSHIP 2006 HERITAGE FOUNDATION RANKING
03/09/06

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's major international stories include Iran warning the US that it could inflict "harm and pain" to match whatever punishment Washington persuaded the UN Security Council to dole out for Tehran's refusal to halt atomic research; the 2006 US State Department Human Rights Report; the 2006 Heritage Foundation ranking; the Argentine Government's defense at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the measures it took during last year related to the investigation of the attack against AMIA headquarters; and a US House of Representatives committee blocking the Bush administration's plan to allow a Dubai company to manage six US ports.

2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "Intransigence"

Claudio Mario Aliscioni, international columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (03/09) "The submission of the Iranian case to the UN Security Council should not be surprising. The intransigence of one sector is paralleled by the intransigence of the other one.

"With its radical stance and unnecessary provocation of Israel, Iran has acquired the mistrust of Western sectors that used to be in tune with it. In this way, Iran hindered its right to develop a nuclear program according to international law.

"For its part, the US is torpedoing every attempt at a diplomatic way out. But, its clear purpose (punishing ayatollahs no matter what) has an obscure dimension.

"Perhaps, it is convenient to remember that the White House was the one who promoted the Iranian nuclear program 30 years ago when the Pahlavi dynasty was in place."

- "Iran, in the hands of the UN Security Council"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" (03/09) reports "After three years of investigations that have not concluded whether or not Tehran's nuclear program has only peaceful purposes, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) decided to submit the Iranian case to the UN Security Council, which leaves the door open for a economic sanctions and in the worst case

military intervention.

"Meanwhile, the verbal confrontation between the US and Iran was further deepened yesterday when representatives of the two countries issued new crossed statements. Tehran warned Washington that their confrontation could well end up causing 'harm and pain' to Washington."

- "The US condemns Venezuela and Cuba"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," comments (03/09)

"Yesterday, according to the US State Department annual report on human rights report, the US accused the Chavez administration of having lashed out at the opposition, politicized the Judicial Branch and imposed restrictions on press freedom last year.

"According to the US report, 'widespread corruption can be observed at all levels' of the Venezuelan administration, although it did not include Venezuela in the group of countries having most number of charges for human rights violations (which includes Cuba, Iran and North Korea, among others).

"In this way, Venezuela became the only Latin American country mentioned in the annual report section focusing on those nations in which 'civil society and independent press are jeopardized,' along with China, Russia, Belarus, Cambodia and Zimbabwe.

"The general human rights report, which was submitted by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, also criticized 'the politicization of the Venezuelan judicial system,' which it termed as 'corrupt, and

inefficient'...

"The US State Department mentioned as an example of (Venezuelan) human rights violations the investigation of four leaders of the Sumate NGO who were accused of conspiracy for having received funds from US corporations to attend training courses and fora on democracy."

- "Washington ponders Argentina's human rights policy"

Conservative "La Prensa" (03/09) reports "Argentina received an approving mark in the US State Department annual report on human rights practices all over the world, according to which neither the Argentine government nor its agents committed politically motivated killings during 2005, but it warned that 'police and prison officers committed killings involving unwarranted or excessive force.'

"According to the report, the USG also denounced some judges' lack of efficiency and corruption in provincial courts.

"Argentina, as well as Chile and Uruguay, obtained a standard approving mark in the report released by the US State Department, according to which generally speaking, during 2005, human rights were honored.'

"'The Kirchner administration generally respected freedom of speech and of the press.' According to the report, the Argentine government moved forward in judicial reform; in August the country's first jury trial was conducted.

"... On the other hand, according to the report, prison conditions are often poor and life threatening.'"

- "Evo Morales denounces 'much US provocation'"

Leading "Clarín" reports (03/09) "Bolivian President Evo Morales insisted that the Bolivian army will return neither the armament nor the equipment asked for by Washington from an antiterrorist unit, while he protested for 'much provocation and aggression from the US Embassy in La Paz.'

"The bilateral tension was unleashed on Monday when Morales mentioned a letter from the US Military Group in Bolivia announcing the immediate withdrawal of Washington's aid for the (Bolivian) Joint Counterterrorist Force due to mistrust of a military leader. The Bolivian president denounced that the US wanted to impose military commanders."

- "Argentina's growth according to the Economic Freedom ranking"

Sergio Serrichio, economic and political columnist of business-financial "El Cronista," comments (03/09) "While it had an average GDP growth rate of 9% per year for three running years, Argentina continues falling in the Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom ranking..."

"According to the 2006 Index of Economic Freedom, the country fell to the 107th rank among a total of 161 nations, 90 scores below its 17th position in 2000, when it obtained its best score in the Heritage Foundation ranking."

"... During an interview with Ana Eiras, Heritage senior analyst, she attributed the recent expansion of the country to external factors, such as the high price of commodities and a favorable external framework, not to the virtues of the country's economic policy... The Argentine economy is 'increasing less competitive' and, with the current policies, its growth is not 'sustainable' in the long run."

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